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ORIGIN AND AIMS OF THE FRANCIS W. PARKER SCHOOL

The origins of the educational trend of which the Francis W. Parker School is a part are so various that one cannot appropriate from among them those that belong to this School. The quality that, perhaps more than any other, determines the kinship of the Parker School is its holding its educational principles as the basis of its existence. That quality is a privilege of educational inheritance.

Every one who has ever brought forth a thought how to better the education of the race is really one of our forbears, for that thought is our life blood.

Our immediate ancestor, who is truly responsible for our existence, is the educator for whom the School is named—Francis W. Parker. He caught the inspiration of real education and he brought that living force, in bringing his life work, to Chicago.

Then, out of a sense of need for Chicago and with wide co-operation, came other efforts that furthered his—and from those efforts evolved two institutions—the School of Education and the Francis W. Parker School.

It is safe to say that the moving power towards the establishment of this School was the belief that the current general process in the education of our youth contains much waste of the inner human values which we sum up in the word character—that it squanders much of the best for the sake of the attainment of the less good—that the prime aim of a real education must be to conserve and develop these finer values—that no good purpose can be conserved by their neglect and disintegration—and that the usual educational institution is so hampered by the weight of ignorant demand and blind conservatism that is laid upon it by a dominating public that where it would, it seldom can be free to take such steps as might even seem very sure ones towards a better education.

In this ground of the original need of starting this School was found the prime rock of its foundation—freedom to carry out such educational policies as should, in its judgment, further a truer education.

Based, then, upon freedom of action in shaping its courses, the Francis W. Parker School has reared its educational superstructure with certain essential features which determine its form—the principles below its performance. These are built with the bricks and the mortar, the line and the trowel of constant, persistent, thorough work, which alone can bring ideals into a living actuality.

The shape and proportions and character of this educational structure are best portrayed by dwelling upon some of the architectural features which determine its personality as a creation.

In its plan, the growing child is taken as its charge in his triple nature—body, mind and spirit—and the principle of the School maintains that none of these integral parts of his life may be injured or neglected.

In its triple responsibility, it is impossible to say which part of life the School holds as most essential.

In its ideal, the body must be held to be the support of the whole of life and the first necessity is to foster and create an ample physical foundation. To this end, the arrangement of the school working day is studied to adjust the various kinds of activities to the right period of the day and the right relation to other activities in respect to mental and physical fatigue. To this end, the largest possible amount of definite physical training is allotted to the pupils—and to this end, provision is made for out-door play space and for out-door play periods for all sections of the School.

In the School's ideal, the mind must receive, during the years of formation of habit and of power, the training that will fit it to grasp problems in their entirety and essence, to reach conclusions with vigor and clearness, and to attempt solutions with determination and perseverance. And towards the up-building of such power, all of the mental training of the School is daily and hourly directed.

In the School's ideal, all of this power would be but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, if the spirit governing it looked not towards the light. So it is sought that every influence of every part of the School work shall stimulate the child's growth spiritually—and if any part of it led his spirit downward, instead of upward, it would be cast out as a failure in the one region that must be held sacred—which no influence must endanger—his spiritual growth.

In this edifice, which calls itself a school, but more rightly might name itself a life, there are two great towers that stand like the towers of a cathedral confronting him who enters in search of what truth he may find. These dominate his consciousness of the whole—forming the keynotes around which he groups all of his impressions as the work itself verily groups itself around them. They are: the development of the right attitude of the individual to self, as related to others; and the development of the individual's initiative in all of his own processes.

The School holds that the motive of the individual's activities is a dominating factor of importance to his activities—as vital in importance as is breath to life; and that the motive of work must not be the advancement of self as against another, nor yet for the benefit of self alone, but must be for the furtherance of one's own powers and possibilities as a factor for all.

To make this aim an actuality, competition is ruled out as a force in the school work, personal aggrandizement is done away with in every form and in its place is brought in the social motive as an ever present, powerful, active force, inspiring and producing in all the pupils the best that in them lies.

The School holds that nothing is done unless the mind within does it. Processes plastered on by another's activity, though they may adhere under the pressure for a time, do not affect the growth of the mind but may be rather a waste, both of time and power, inasmuch as they may lead the mind further along the path of inactivity and inane acceptance of another's work to take the place of one's own and thus become steps which must be retraced before one's own work may be done. In the field of intellectual work, this path is a subtle one to find for the pupil, for each cannot, with use, reconstruct wholly all the steps of advanced civilized thought and do over all of the world's discovery of processes. It is the art of the teacher so to lead the way that civilization's contribution to each individual may be appropriated by a process that is his own and goes to the making of a real self, instead of the creation of a parrot of what has gone before—a process that is inner and consists of mental feeding, assimilation and growth, instead of a process that consists of the putting on of external layers—a process that produces thought power, not merely the power to reproduce others' thoughts.

In the still more important field of the acquisition of self-control, the same principle holds. No discipline produces growth which only restrains by any external force, whether that is of physical control or of fear of external happenings.

Growth being the prime result aimed for, therefore, all rules and all disciplinary measures for the disregard of them have as much relation to the pupils' own judgment as the essential regulating of the school life will allow—and it is not too much to say that the direct relation to their judgment is held at all points.

These two principles of the contribution, rather than the aggrandizement of self, and of the initiative essential to all real work, might, combined, be termed the right selfhood: self, not dominating as a goal for endeavor; self, choosing, directing and maintaining endeavor at all points. The true and inner—as against the artificial and unreal—accomplishment of this great purpose for every individual is the fundamental aim of the work of this School.

Passing in under the two lofty spires, one finds distinctive features within.

Immediately one is confronted, as if with an altar to man's upward progress through work, with the belief that the hand of man is the immediate upholder of the brain—that they are so close in co-operation as to be almost in a union—that in their education, the action and reaction is so immediate and constant that the benefit of one is the benefit of the other. In the early years, it is the hand that contributes most to the brain. Later, the relation is reversed and the developed brain power contributes constantly to the ability of the work of the hand. The belief of the School is that the two should be co-ordinated in training. All through the school years, hand work is brought into close connection with intellectual work wherever possible, to reinforce and vivify it and to give the intellectual work of every pupil direct relation to his own constructive powers.

Another distinctive feature—as of a richness of color and detail—is the belief that every growing mind may, with the right principles of teaching, be brought into living touch with the riches of history and of nature, in such contact that the individual may enter into some parts of the kingdom of the world and possess them as his own. And, also, the belief that such possession of the world

may be the avenue for the achievement of the technique of reading and writing—and, indeed, that all of the processes to be mastered for technical skill may be allied with the whole of school life instead of being left as segregated, unrelated spots of half-awake activity which are never quite joined to the personality of a pupil's work.

Thus we see the daily course of the daily round of school, instead of being set apart as a time given over wholly to a routine preparation for some other sphere of living, is itself an opportunity for living.

From the kindergarten upward, we see realms of nature taken out of the region of the book and made territories of discovery and of practical application by the doing of processes and the grappling with the problems of the human mastery of animate and inanimate nature. We hear pupils giving us, in rare quality, music of the masters and interpreting to us, in fine form, thoughts of all the ages, in reading and in drama. We see periods in history made real by being associated with work in science and with handwork, with literature and with dramatic work—we see pupils inhabiting Greece and reproducing in story and in play its spirit of art—we see pupils building anew their own city—we see pupils traveling with the great explorers over the surface of the earth—and, as they come nearer to their own citizenship, we see them constructing civics of their own making—and we see the powers thus developed used for the benefit of all.

In short, we see that the school life is a preparation in being itself a foretaste of a rich world of fact and fancy in which one may live fully and do abundantly.

One learns, as he proceeds, that through the whole edifice runs—like the proportion and measurement and balance of the cathedral plan—the high ideal of quality and power to be attained through these educational steps, and one learns that fine quality and high power may be the outcome and are not too much to expect.

Within, the service begins when the children break forth in their expression—in the overflowing of the thought life developing in them. The forms of their expressions are as various as the individuals. The spontaneity and variety of these are the crowning test of the School's work. They come pouring forth in every con-

ceivable shape—and the School holds these productions of brain achievement, of hand achievement, of physical skill, of literary outpouring, of dramatic grasp, of musical joy and fineness, and above all, the expressions of self-control and self-contribution that are its constant inspiration—these, the School holds as its real life.

From work which contains the voluntary outgoing of the mind and spirit, inspired by a motive which does not end in self but which is, at all times, uplifted and ennobled and deepened by an underlying, unconscious purpose of usefulness to a greater whole; from work which brings the individual into contact with the wealth of the ages from which he draws living interest and to which he gives the gratitude of an inheritor; from work which leads the individual to establish his own relation to the achievements of the race by adding the power and wealth of his own hand-work in some service worthy of it; out of such a setting of work comes as a flower from the soil, rather than as a garment put on, the discipline that real education strives for, the discipline of the mind and the heart that comes alone from real power within.

Do we mean that the Francis W. Parker School succeeds at all times in all these directions equally? Certainly not. But in setting forth its aims, we set forth the proportions and shape of its plans into which it is constantly and more fully completing its structure.

It is only its serious attempt to reach for and work towards such ideals that brings it to the community to speak of them—the purpose of such speaking being but to obtain moral support and encouragement to help it to go forward, to bespeak correction and suggestion where such may arise for its still greater help and speeding in the right direction, and to contribute what light it may to others seeking the same educational goals.

St. Paul's statement that he died daily must have meant more truly that he was born daily. That side of his statement would apply most truly to our School—for with hearts and minds set to the future and to each dawn, every day brings new revelations of ways and of depths and of heights in education.